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Secretary Shultz

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Morality and Realism in American Foreign Policy

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Following is an address by Secretary Shultz before the National Committee on American Foreign Policy on the occasion of receiving the Hans J. Morgenthau Memorial Award, New York City, October 2, 1985.

I deeply appreciate this marvelous award because of the greatness of the man in whose honor it was established. My appreciation is doubly reinforced because of the greatness of the man [Dr. Henry Kissinger] who has just made this presentation.

Hans Morgenthau's Legacy

Hans Morgenthau was a pioneer in the study of international relations. He, perhaps more than anyone else, gave it intellectual respectability as an academic discipline. His work transformed our thinking about international relations and about America's role in the postwar world. In fundamental ways, he set the terms of the modern debate, and it is hard to imagine what our policies would be like today had we not had the benefit of his wisdom and the clarity of his thinking.

As a professor at the University of Chicago—and I was once a professor at the University of Chicago and a colleague of his—in 1948 he published the first edition of his epoch-making text, *Politics Among Nations.* Its impact was immediate—and alarming to many. It focused on the reality of so-called power politics and the balance of power—the evils of the Old World conflicts that immigrants had come to this country to escape and which Wilsonian idealism had sought to eradicate.

Morgenthau's critics, however, tended to miss what he was really saying about international morality and ethics. The choice, he insisted, is not between moral principles and the national interest, devoid of moral dignity, but between moral principles divorced from political reality and moral principles derived from political reality. And he called on Americans to relearn the principles of statecraft and political morality that had guided the Founding Fathers.

Hans Morgenthau was right in this. Our Declaration of Independence set forth principles, after all, that we believed to be universal. And throughout our history, Americans as individuals—and, sometimes, as a nation—have frequently expressed our hopes for a world based on those principles. The very nature of our society makes us a people with a moral vision, not only for ourselves but for the world.

At the same time, however, we Americans have had to accept that our passionate commitment to moral principles could be no substitute for a sound foreign policy in a world of hard realities and complex choices. Our Founding Fathers, in fact, understood this very well.

Hans Morgenthau wrote that "the intoxication with moral abstractions . . . is one of the great sources of weakness and failure in American foreign policy." He was assailing the tendency among Americans at many periods in our later history to hold ourselves above power politics and to believe that moral principles alone could guide us in our relations with the rest of the world. He correctly worried that our moral impulse, noble as it might be, could lead either to futile and perhaps dangerous global crusades, on the one hand, or to escapism and isolationism, equally dangerous, on the other.

The challenge we have always faced has been to forge policies that could combine morality and realism that would be in keeping with our ideals without doing damage to our national interests. Hans Morgenthau's work shaped our national debate about this challenge with an unprecedented intensity and clarity.

Ideals and Interests Today

That debate still continues today. But today there is a new reality.

The reality today is that our moral principles and our national interests may be converging, by necessity, more than ever before. The revolutions in communications and transportation have made the world a smaller place. Events in one part of the world have a more far-reaching impact than ever before on the international environment and on our national security. Even individual acts of violence by terrorists can affect us in ways never possible before the advent of international electronic media.

Yesterday, outside of Tunis, violence struck yet again in the Middle East. In the face of rising terrorist acts of violence against the citizens of Israel, yesterday saw Israel's response in its

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attack on the facilities of the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization] in Tunis. Terrorism is terrorism. It deserves no sanctuary, and it must be stopped.

But where do we go from here? Do we go toward more and more violence, or do we go toward peace? I say, it is time to say, "Enough. Enough to violence in the Middle East." We have heard the exclamation point of violence. Let us now follow it with a period, a period that signifies an end to armed struggle and a commitment to find a negotiated way to peace and justice.

Let us reject the radicals and the haters. Let us turn toward and support and encourage those who stand for reason and statesmanship, like President Bourguiba of Tunisia. President Bourguiba leads a country which has long been a close friend of the United States, and he shares our dedication to a more peaceful world. President Bourguiba is, indeed, one of those farseeing and wise statesmen, who was among the very first to urge a negotiated settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

And let us rally in support of those who display the courage to move toward peace. We have had, in recent days, intensive talks with King Hussein of Jordan, aimed at our joint goal of advancing the peace process and the day when negotiations can start. We support his efforts. We admire his wisdom and courage and pray that we may soon see the opening of a new chapter in the expansion of the peace process.

And let us recognize a leader whose commitment to peace is unequivocal and beyond question: Prime Minister Shimon Peres. The truth is unavoidable. There will be no justice for the Middle East unless it is understood that there is no military option and that the only road to peace and justice lies through direct negotiations between Israel and each of its Arab neighbors.

In our world, our ideals and our interests thus are intimately connected. In the long run, the survival of America and American democracy is essential if freedom itself is to survive. No one who cherishes freedom and democracy could argue that these ideals can be gained through policies that weaken this nation.

We are the strongest free nation on earth. Our closest allies are democracies and depend on us for their security. And our security and well-being are enhanced in a world where democracy flourishes and where the global economic system is open and free. We could not hope to survive long if our fellow democracies succumbed to totalitarianism. Thus, we have a vital stake in the direction the world takes—whether it be toward greater freedom or toward dictatorship.

All of this requires that we engage ourselves in the politics of the real world, for both moral and strategic reasons. And the more we engage ourselves in the world, the more we must grapple with the difficult moral choices that the real world presents to us.

We have friends and allies who do not always live up to our standards of freedom and democratic government, yet we cannot abandon them. Our adversaries are the worst offenders of the principles we cherish, yet in the nuclear age, we have no choice but to seek solutions by political means. We are vulnerable to terrorism because we are a free and law-abiding society, yet we must find a way to respond that is consistent with our ideals as a free and law-abiding society.

The challenge of pursuing policies that reflect our ideals and yet protect our national interests is, for all the difficulties, one that we must meet. The political reality of our time is that America's strategic interests require that we support our ideals abroad.

Consider the example of Nicaragua. We oppose the efforts of the communist leaders in Nicaragua to consolidate a totalitarian regime on the mainland of Central America—on both moral and strategic grounds. Few in the United States would deny today that the Managua regime is a moral disaster. The communists have brutally repressed the Nicaraguan people's yearning for freedom and self-government, the same yearning that had earlier made possible the overthrow of the Somoza tyranny. But there are some in this country who would deny that America has a strategic stake in the outcome of the ideological struggle underway in Nicaragua today. Can we not, they ask, accept the existence of this regime in our hemisphere even if we find its ideology abhorrent? Must we oppose it simply because it is communist?

The answer is we must oppose the Nicaraguan dictators not simply because they are communists but because they are communists who serve the interests of the Soviet Union and its Cuban client and who threaten peace in this hemisphere. The facts are indisputable. Had the communists adopted even a neutral international posture after their revolution; had they not threatened their neighbors, our friends and allies in the region, with subversion and aggression; had they not lent logistical and material support to the Marxist-Leninist guerrillas in El Salvador—in short, had they not become instruments of Soviet global strategy, the United States would have had a less clear strategic interest in opposing them.

Our relations with China and Yugoslavia show that we are prepared for constructive relations with communist countries regardless of ideological differences. Yet, as a general principle in the postwar world, the United States has and does oppose communist expansionism, most particularly as practiced by the Soviet Union and its surrogates. We do so not because we are crusaders in the grip of ideological or messianic fervor, but because our strategic interests, by any cool and rational analysis, require us to do so.

Our interests, however, also require something more. It is not enough to know only what we are against. We must also know what we are for. And in the modern world, our national interests require us to be on the side of freedom and democratic change everywhere—and no less in such areas of strategic importance to us as Central America, South Africa, the Philippines, and South Korea.

We understood this important lesson in Western Europe almost 40 years ago, with the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and NATO; and we learned the lesson again in just the last 4 years in El Salvador: the best defense against the threat of communist takeover is the strengthening of freedom and democracy. The most stable friends and allies of the United States are invariably the democratic nations. They are stable because they exist to serve the needs of the people and because they give every segment of society a chance to influence, peacefully and legally, the course their nation takes. They are stable because no one can question their fundamental legitimacy. No would-be revolutionary can claim to represent the people against some ruling oligarchy because the people can speak for themselves. And the people never "choose" communism.

One of the most difficult challenges we face today is in South Africa. Americans naturally find apartheid totally reprehensible. It must go. But how shall it go? Our influence is limited. Shall we try to undermine the South African economy in an effort to topple the white regime, even if that would hurt the very people we are trying to help as well as neighboring black countries whose economies are heavily dependent on South Africa? Do we want to see the country become so unstable that there is a violent revolution? History teaches that the black majority might likely wind up exchanging one set

of oppressors for another and, yes, could be worse off.

The premise of the President's policy is that we cannot wash our hands of the problem or strike moralistic poses. The only course consistent with American principles is to stay engaged as a force for peaceful change. Our interests and our values are parallel because the present system is doomed, and the only alternative to a radical, violent outcome is a political acommodation now, before it is too late.

The moral—and the practical—policy is to use our influence to encourage a peaceful transition to a just society. It is not our job to cheer on, from the sidelines, a race war in southern Africa or to accelerate trends that will inexorably produce the same result.

Therefore, the centerpiece of our policy is a call for political dialogue and negotiation between the government and representative black leaders. Such an effort requires that we keep in contact with all parties, black and white; it means encouraging the South African Government to go further and faster on a course on which it has already haltingly embarked. The President's Executive order a month ago, therefore, was directed against the machinery of apartheid, but in a way that did not magnify the hardship of the victims of apartheid. This approach may suffer the obloquy of the moral absolutists—of those opposed to change and of those demanding violent change. But we will stick to this course because it is right.

The Importance of Realism

A foreign policy based on realism, therefore, cannot ignore the importance of either ideology or morality. But realism *does* require that we avoid foreign policies based exclusively on moral absolutes divorced from political reality. Hans Morgenthau was right to warn against the dangers of such moral crusades or escapism.

We know that the spread of communism is inimical to our interests, but we also know that we are not omnipotent and that we must set priorities. We cannot send American troops to every region of the world threatened by Soviet-backed communist insurgents, though there may be times when that is the right choice and the only choice, as in Grenada. The wide range of challenges we face requires that we choose from an equally wide range of responses: from economic and security assistance to aid for freedom fighters to direct military action when necessary. We must discriminate; we must be prudent; we must use all the tools at our disposal and respond in ways appropriate to the challenge. Realism, as Hans Morgenthau understood it, is also a counsel of restraint and healthy common sense.

We also know that supporting democratic progress is a difficult task. Our influence in fostering democracy is often limited in those nations where it has never before taken root, where rulers are reluctant to give up their privileged status, where civil strife is rampant, where extreme proverty and inequality pose obstacles to social and political progress.

Moral posturing is no substitute for effective policies. Nor can we afford to distance ourselves from all the difficult and ambiguous moral choices of the real world. We may often have to accept the reality that advances toward democracy and greater freedom in some important pro-Western nations may be slow and will require patience.

If we use our power to push our nondemocratic allies too far and too fast, we may, in fact, destroy the hope for greater freedom; and we may also find that the regimes we inadvertently bring into power are the worst of both worlds: they may be both hostile to our interests *and* more repressive and dictatorial than those we sought to change. We need only remember what happened in Iran and Nicaragua. The fall of a strategically located, friendly country can strengthen Soviet power and, thus, set back the cause of freedom regionally and globally.

But we must also remember what happened in El Salvador and throughout Latin America in the past 5 years—and, for that matter, what is happening today in Nicaragua, Cambodia, Afghanistan, and Angola, where people are fighting and dying for independence and freedom. What we do in each case must vary according to the circumstances, but there should not be any doubt of whose side we are on.

Our Ideals as a Source of Strength

Over 20 years ago, President Kennedy pledged that the United States would "pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and the success of liberty." We know now that the scope of that commitment was too broad, even though it reflected a keen understanding of the relevance of our ideals to our foreign policy. More recently, another administration took the position that our fear of communism was inordinate and emphasized that there were severe limits to America's ability or right to influence world events. I believe this was a council of despair, a sign that we had lost faith in ourselves and in our values.

Somewhere between these two poles lies the natural and sensible scope of American foreign policy. Our ideals must be a source of strength—not paralysis—in our struggle against aggression, international lawlessness, and terrorism. We have learned that our moral convictions must be tempered and tested in daily grappling with the realities of the modern world. But we have also learned that our ideals have value and relevance, that the idea of freedom is a powerful force. Our ideals have a concrete, practical meaning today. They not only point the way to a better world, they reflect some of the most powerful currents at work in the contemporary world. The striving for justice, freedom, progress, and peace is an ever-present reality that is today, more than ever, impressing itself on international politics.

As Hans Morgenthau understood, the conduct of a realistic and principled foreign policy is an honorable endeavor and an inescapable responsibility. We draw strength from our ideals and principles, and we and our friends among the free nations will not shrink from using our strength to defend and further the values and principles that have made us great. ■

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